

CIA/OGCR /PN 61.2684/75 ITEM 006 CONFIDENTIAL--PRC CITY BRIEF PEKING

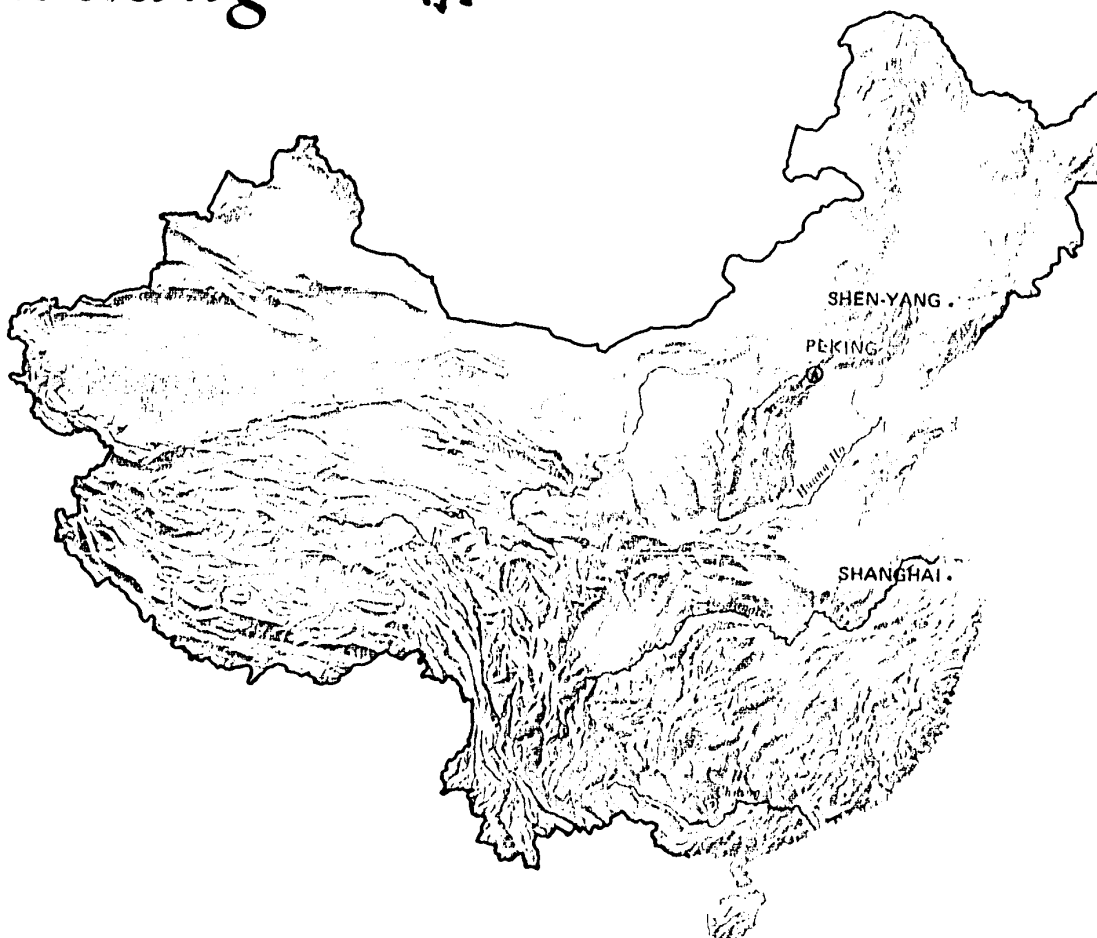
CIA JUL75

01 OF 01

ITEM 006

PRC CITY BRIEF

Peking 北京



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CIA/OGCR/GD
PN 61.2684/75
July 1975

PEKING (Pei-ching)
(pronounced Bay jing)

Chinese romanized system of spelling:	Beijing																									
Meaning in Chinese:	northern capital																									
Location:	39°55'N 116°23'E (approx. latitude of Philadelphia and Denver)																									
Elevation:	165 feet above sea level																									
Population:	7,570,000 in municipality; 4,000,000 in built-up area (total municipality comprises 6,800 square miles and includes nine rural counties)																									
Climate:	<table><thead><tr><th></th><th>Jan</th><th>April</th><th>July</th><th>Oct</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Mean daily maximum temperature (°F)</td><td>35</td><td>69</td><td>89</td><td>69</td></tr><tr><td>Mean daily minimum temperature (°F)</td><td>14</td><td>43</td><td>71</td><td>44</td></tr><tr><td>Mean number of days with precipitation</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>13</td><td>3</td></tr><tr><td>Mean monthly precipitation (inches)</td><td>0.2</td><td>0.7</td><td>9.6</td><td>0.6</td></tr></tbody></table>		Jan	April	July	Oct	Mean daily maximum temperature (°F)	35	69	89	69	Mean daily minimum temperature (°F)	14	43	71	44	Mean number of days with precipitation	3	4	13	3	Mean monthly precipitation (inches)	0.2	0.7	9.6	0.6
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PEKING

General

Peking has been the capital of China for most of the past 700 years, but its political significance has never been as great as it is today. It is the seat of the strongest central government in China's history. From here the leadership sets in motion the political campaigns and economic programs that dominate the lives of the people everywhere in the country. Nearly all aspects of the revolutionary culture are directed from Peking. The official newspaper, People's Daily, publicizing events in the capital and through its editorials, instructs the far-flung political hierarchy. The New China News Agency broadcasts to China and the world the official version of news as it relates to China. Even the clocks in China are set to Peking time despite the country's 3,000-mile east-west extent across at least four international time zones.

Peking is a strong magnet and most visitors will agree that the city is unique and something of a paradox. Peking has retained its antiquity and combined it with modern suburban growth. Although the city serves as the capital for a relatively new political force, the trappings of Imperial China dominate the landscape. The main square, at T'ien-an Men -- a place for political demonstrations, or idling -- is a combination of monuments to Imperial China and the Communist Revolution. Some describe Peking as a big city operating like a small town. Despite its size it lacks daily rush hour upheavals since there is no central business district. As in smaller towns, the people in Peking retire early, and there is no night life. Street lighting is poor, and the city is quite dark at night.

The population of Peking is about 7,570,000, but nearly half live outside the urban center in the several thousand square miles of rural area that have been annexed to the municipality. The built-up area, only about 2 percent of the municipality, has more than doubled in population since 1949 to about 4 million. It has spilled outside of the old city and sprawls across the plain in an unsymmetrical but spacious arrangement of apartment buildings, sports complexes, educational institutions, industrial plants, and farming communes. Within the inner city tall buildings rise in a few places above the old rooftops, but the scene is dominated by squat, gray dwellings huddled inside drab walls that stand blankly along the narrow alleys and streets. The new buildings are monotonously squarish with an occasional bizarre combination of new

design and traditional Chinese architecture. The pace of construction in Peking is swift both above and below ground. The 40-foot walls around Peking have been demolished and are being replaced by a circumferential subway system. Other excavations reflect an unconcealed interest in civil defense that has resulted in the building of an underground city of shelters.

The historic role of Peking as a major transportation center has changed little in recent times, except that the airplane is now frequently used for intercity passenger travel and the haulage of small, light goods. A number of airfields are located in the Peking area, but most of them are for military use. Nearly all civil traffic uses the Peking Central Airport (Capital Airport), one of the few international airfields in China, about 10 miles northeast of the city. Most intercity transport -- freight and passenger -- is still by train, and major railroad lines radiate from the city. Within the city, the subway will eventually link all sections of Peking.

Probably the best time of the year to visit Peking is late September and early October, after the summer rains lose their intensity. During this short and pleasant period, Peking remains green and cool prior to an abrupt transition into a very cold winter. Cold then permeates the city -- which generally lacks central heating -- and everyone bundles into extra clothing, even when indoors. Temperatures sometimes drop below 0°F. The ground and vegetation dry up, and by late winter, brisk winds begin to swirl the Peking dust -- fine, yellow loessial silt that seeps into everything. Spring arrives in April, but at this time of year duststorms are also most likely to sweep out of Central Asia. The normal summer is characterized by spells of oppressive heat interspersed with periods of heavy rainfall; temperatures occasionally may exceed 100°F. Rainfall is usually insignificant until June, but amounts and seasonal distributions are highly variable. Rains normally build to a maximum in July, when almost 40 percent of the total annual precipitation occurs, much of it in downpours associated with violent thunderstorms.

History

The origins of Peking possibly date back to around 2000 B.C. Much of Peking's importance is derived from its site. It was first a northern rampart against outside invasion and later the fortified home of the Imperial Court. The basic plan for present-day Peking was laid out by the Mongol (Yuan) Dynasty about 1268, and the core of the present city, established during the early part of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), is situated approximately

on the ruins of the Mongol city. Peking had a long and glorious reign as the Imperial Capital but fell into moderate disrepair after the demise of the Manchu (Ch'ing) Dynasty in 1912.

Travelers have always been strongly attracted to Peking. Marco Polo spent several years in the latter part of the 13th century here, when the city was known as Ta-tu or Khanbalic, before returning to Europe to spread tales of Peking's fantastic beauty and riches. Although the possibilities of commerce were appealing to Europeans, Chinese rulers looked with disfavor on any expansion of contacts with foreign countries. A handful of foreigners managed to live or to travel in China, but its capital was inaccessible to most non-Chinese during the ensuing centuries. The barriers restricting entrance of foreigners eventually weakened, and by the 19th century a sizable body of non-Chinese were living in Peking. By this time the Empire was in decay, and Peking's grandeur was deteriorating. Xenophobic inhabitants remained in semi-seclusion behind the myriad walls of hu-t'ung (street or alley) compounds, and the Emperor and his retinue remained hidden from view in the Forbidden City. Peking continued to serve as the capital of most of the country during the chaotic years following the end of the Manchu Dynasty. By 1928 the newly established Republic of China renamed the city Pei-p'ing (northern peace), a name used during the late 14th and early 15th centuries, and moved the capital to Nan-ching.

Industry

Although its industrial development has been highly diverse, Peking still ranks considerably below Shanghai or Shen-yang as a manufacturing center. The city is now a significant producer of textiles and synthetic fibers, petrochemicals, automotive and agricultural equipment, and light and heavy machinery; recent industrial growth has placed some emphasis on the production of communications and electrical equipment, electronics equipment, and advanced military weapons. It has a large and growing skilled-labor force, and most enterprises are supported by the presence of the nation's leading technical research facilities and personnel.

Although Peking is a very busy city, it is relatively unencumbered by the traffic jams and rush hour patterns of most major cities, mainly because of the lack of privately owned automobiles and the absence of a central business district that would concentrate traffic flow toward one sector of the city. Furthermore, the distances traveled are reasonably short, and most people either walk or use bicycles; most workers in Peking's

factories live in dormitories or apartments near their work. Still, Peking's streets are filled with a conglomeration of pedestrians and vehicles -- buses, trolleys, and bicycles -- and everyone seems to be on the go. Few are idle in this city, and the large number of nurseries attest to the prevalence of working mothers.

Attractions

The many and varied attractions of Peking offer more to visitors than those of any other city in China. Peking is also the site of the leading social, educational, and governmental organizations. The newer industrial plants near the city provide glimpses of China's technological development; a large petrochemical plant is to the southwest. Peking's museums contain a wide range of historical and cultural relics and records from both ancient and modern China, archaeological finds, and modern exhibitions. The city has the finest zoo in the country.

Recreation in Peking now stresses wholesome athletics, and the illicit pleasures and much of the night life of pre-Communist days have disappeared. The numerous large sports complexes are in almost constant use, and most organizations have athletic facilities to accommodate workers and students. Theaters still abound in Peking although the fare is slim, the dominant theme of most productions being political.

An initial point of interest in Peking is T'ien-an Men, the Gate of Heavenly Peace, located in the geographical center of the city. It is a symbol of China -- the podium from which Mao Tse-tung proclaimed the Peoples Republic in 1949. The massive square in front of the Gate accommodates huge throngs for political rallies and festivals. The Great Hall of the People, at the west edge of the square, is a meeting place for major political events -- such as the convening of a Party Congress.

Behind T'ien-an Men, to the north, is the old Forbidden City, formerly the home of the Ming and Ch'ing emperors and now called the Palace Museum. The beautiful buildings with the graceful yellow-tiled roofs are largely hidden from view behind high walls and a wide moat. Numerous historic and cultural relics are displayed in various museums, but it is only since the late 1960s that the general public has been permitted entrance.

Outside the walls of the Palace Museum to the west and north are former playgrounds of the Imperial Court that now serve as

parks for the people. Pei Hai Park is probably the most popular recreation spot in the city. Its tree-lined promenades and picnic spots provide relaxation for large numbers of Chinese. In summer rowboats dot the lake, which becomes a skating rink in winter. The origins of Pei Hai Park date back 700 years to Kublai Khan, and some of the structures in the park are older than any in the Forbidden City. Mao Tse-tung and other leaders have their homes and offices in the more secluded Chung-nai Hai area, just to the west of the Palace Museum.

The Altar of Heaven (T'ien-t'an), in the southern part of the city, was formerly the most sacred spot in Imperial Peking. A grandiose complex of immense proportions, it contains majestic temples, halls, gates, and gardens. The culminating feature within it is the altar, which in former times only the Emperor could ascend; this he did annually to offer sacrifices to the Supreme Being. The current regime has kept the Altar of Heaven in good condition and uses it mainly as a park.

Foreign tourists usually join the many Chinese who flock to the Summer Place (I-ho Yuan), at the northwest edge of the city. Most of this magnificent layout of buildings and walkways on the slopes of a low hill and along the edge of a beautiful lake dates to the latter days of the Ch'ing Dynasty, around the turn of this century.

The Great Wall, a motor trip of about 40 miles to the northwest of Peking, is another "must" for visitors. This relic is over 2,000 years old and stretches from the deserts of western China eastward to the sea. It represents the old boundary between the agricultural society of China and the barren domain of the herdsmen of Central Asia. The Wall is now mostly in ruins, but the section near Peking has been restored and is a popular recreation site among Chinese workers, especially on weekends.

A visit to the Great Wall generally includes a stop at the Ming Tombs, situated in a beautiful valley at the edge of the mountains, few miles closer to Peking. All but 1 of the 14 Ming Emperors who ruled China from 1368 until 1644 are buried in the Tombs. The broad, impressive complex is being slowly renovated by the Chinese. The underground burial vault in one of the tombs has been opened, and visitors may view the resting place and priceless trappings of its occupant.



